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TO **REFORMATION**



LATIN FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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FROM **ROME**
TO **REFORMATION**



EARLY EUROPEAN FOR THE
HISTORY NEW
MILLENNIUM

By **Rose Williams**



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From Rome to Reformation
Early European History for the New Millennium

Rose Williams

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FOREWORD

As the strength of the Roman Empire crumbled away, the Western world was left in chaos and denial. Rome's central authority had bound most of Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa together for centuries. Its shining moment had been the **Pax Romana** (27 BCE–180 CE), and yet century after century its military and political stability continued to provide the visible benefits of roads, aqueducts, and well-built cities, and the invisible ones of organization and efficient administration. As these benefits decayed or disappeared, the fragments of the collapsed empire coalesced as best they might around the patchwork of small kingdoms and tribal states that were evolving from the shambles, while clinging to the Latin language and firmly proclaiming that they were Romans and that they lived in the Roman Empire.

Western Christians both **Arian** and **Trinitarian** had enthusiastically sought converts during the Late Empire, and the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople had developed its own form of Christianity. Christian monasteries and cathedrals became the repositories of such literature and learning as could be saved from the constant upheavals, and education was in the hands of the clerics. Unfortunately intensely religious people are notoriously intolerant of other intensely religious people of a somewhat different persuasion, so wars arose between Christians. Sometimes those clerical hands held a Holy Book in one and a sword in the other. In the time of Clovis, fifth-century king of the Franks, religion and learning were sometimes spread by force, and this tendency did not decrease when Islam rose to conflict with Christianity.

Yet religion, in early Western Europe emanating from Rome, was the unifying force that grew out of the ruin. In turbulent political situations, religious authority came to transcend the secular in some cases and to reach across political boundaries. And always permeating the Western World as it struggled for its lost stability and unity was the memory of Rome, the *Urbs Aeterna*, whose myth, as the centuries passed, became almost more powerful than the political entity had been.

PREFACE

From Rome to Reformation: Early European History for the New Millennium is a brief but rich survey of the history and Latin literature of post-antique Europe. A connected chronological overview of people and their writings helps students understand more about them, what they have achieved, and what they considered significant enough to be written down and passed on for future generations. This short reader follows the emergence of the nation states of early Europe through the various epochs of early European history. As such, it is a history of the ideas of western civilization and of the Latin literature in which most of those ideas were communicated. Students of ancient literature, the humanities, language, culture, and history will all find this a useful read.

Terms that might be unfamiliar to the reader are emphasized in bold-face type at their first appearance. The notes section at the back of the book provides an explanation for the terms.

From Rome to Reformation: Early European History for the New Millennium serves an ancillary and quick reference book for any group studying the early European world. It is an especially good resource for those using the Bolchazy-Carducci textbook *Latin for the New Millennium Level 2* and coordinates as follows.

CORRELATION WITH LATIN FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM LEVEL 2

- I. Italy and Spain Face the Fall
LNM 2 Chapter 1
- II. Britain Struggles with Fate
LNM 2 Chapter 1
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- XV. Church Reforms and Statecraft Go Awry
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- XVII. Knowledge Grows and Wisdom Makes an Effort
LNM 2 Chapter 15

TIMELINE

Authors and Literature		Roman and European History
		Later Roman History
	379–395	Reign of Theodosius in both halves of the Roman Empire
	ca. 405	The Vulgate Latin translation of the Bible is completed by Jerome
	408–450	Reign of Theodosius II in the Eastern Empire
	ca. 461	St. Patrick dies
	476	Romulus Augustulus abdicates
Early Middle Ages	ca. 500–ca. 1000	Early Middle Ages
Boethius	ca. 480–524	
	493–526	Theodoric the Ostrogoth, <i>Rex Italiae</i> , rules Italy
	507	Frankish king Clovis defeats Visigoth kings in Southern Gaul: they rule in Spain
	511	Clovis dies; kingdom in Gaul is divided among his four sons
	527–565	Justinian rules Eastern Roman Empire, conquers Vandals in North Africa, establishes Exarchate of Ravenna, codifies Roman law
	ca. 540–600	Anglo-Saxon heptarchy rises
	552	Justinian crushes Ostrogoths in Italy, takes part of Spain from Visigoths
	558	Lombards invade northern Italy
Isidore of Seville	ca. 560–636	
	590	Gregory the Great becomes Pope. The first Archbishop of Canterbury named Augustine, baptizes Aethelbert of Kent first Anglo-Saxon Christian king

	623	Pepin I becomes Mayor of the Palace and <i>de facto</i> ruler in Gaul
	ca. 610–632	The Quran, sacred book of Islam, is compiled
	634–41	Muslims conquer Syria and Egypt
	655	Penda of Mercia, last pagan king in Anglo-Saxon England, dies
Venerable Bede	ca. 673–735	
	698	Carthage, last Byzantine stronghold in Africa, taken by Muslims
	711	Muslims defeat Visigoths in Spain
	732	Muslims advance into southern Gaul from Spain; stopped by Charles Martel at Poitiers
	756	Donation of Pepin begins the Papal States
	768	Charlemagne becomes King of the Franks
	757–77	Offa II of Mercia gains power over much of Britain
Einhard	775–840	
	787	Viking ships appear on coast of Britain
	800	Charlemagne crowned <i>Imperator Romanorum</i> in Rome
	814	Charlemagne dies, leaves huge kingdom, including France, Germany, the Low Countries and much of Italy, to his surviving son Louis the Pious
	833	Moravian Empire founded
	844–45	Vikings attack Spain, Hamburg, and Paris
	859	University of Al-Karaouine is founded in Fes, Morocco
	862	St. Cyril and St. Methodius sent to Christianize Slavs; Slavonic joins Latin and Greek as a liturgical language
	871	Alfred the Great becomes King of Wessex
	896	Magyars pillage eastern Danube region
	910	William of Aquitaine founds monastery of Cluny
	912	Charles the Simple, Frankish king, cedes Norman land to Rollo the Viking

	924	Aethelstan becomes king of much of Britain
	955	Treaty between Muslims and Christians strengthens Christian kingdoms in Spain
	962	Otto I of Germany crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope John XII
	980–1037	Avicenna, renowned Muslim thinker, flourishes in intellectual center Baghdad
	987	Hugh Capet becomes King of Île de France in western Francia
High Middle Ages	ca. 1000–ca. 1300	High Middle Ages
	1020	Danish king Cnut unites England, Norway, and Denmark—North Sea Empire
	1018	Byzantine Basil II takes Bulgaria
	1034	Caliphate of Cordova disintegrates into petty Muslim fiefdoms
	1037	William becomes Duke of Normandy; Seljuk Turks expand Ghaznavid Empire in Persia
	1043–60	Seljuks gain Iran and Iraq
	1043–99	“El Cid,” Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, national hero of Spain
	1046	German king Henry III calls Synod of Sutri, resolves disputes between three rival popes, is crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day by new Pope Clement II
	1060	Normans take parts of Italy and Sicily
	1066	Battle of Hastings: William of Normandy (becomes the “Conqueror”) takes Anglo-Saxon England
	1076	Seljuk Turks capture Jerusalem
	1078	Sulayman declared Sultan of Rum, laying claim to former Roman/Byzantine lands in Asia Minor
Peter Abelard	1079–1142	
	1085	Christians capture Toledo; Alfonso VI preserves Mudejar community system
	ca. 1088	University of Bologna founded

	1095	Pope Urban II preaches First Crusade at Council of Clermont
	1098	First Crusader state, Edessa, founded
	1099	Crusaders take Jerusalem
	1100–1145	Geoffrey of Monmouth chronicles Arthurian Legend
	1106	Henry I of England takes Normandy
	1108	Louis VI becomes King of France
	1109	Crusader Raymond of Toulouse takes Tripoli
	ca. 1110	Abul-Qasim Ferdowsi publishes the Persian epic, <i>Shahnameh</i> (<i>Book of Kings</i>)
	1115	Florence becomes commune ruled by nobles; Bernard of Clairvaux founds Abbey of Cîteaux
	1116	al-Battani's <i>Kitab al-Zij</i> is translated into Latin as <i>De motu stellarum</i>
	1118	Knights Templar founded in Jerusalem
	1124	Crusaders take Tyre from Muslims
	1126–98	Ibn Rushd, "Averroës," great Muslim commentator on Aristotle
William of Tyre	1130–85	
	1143	Rome and Venice become communes ruled by nobles
	1144	Seljuks overrun Edessa, triggering the Second Crusade
	1147	Alfonso I and Crusaders defeat Muslims in Spain
	ca. 1150	<i>Carmina Burāna</i> compiled
	1152	Henry of Anjou marries Eleanor of Aquitaine, founding the Plantagenet dynasty of England and France
	1155	Frederick Barbarossa becomes Holy Roman Emperor
	ca. 1160	University of Paris founded
Archpoet	fl. ca. 1163	
	1169	Saladin becomes ruler of Egypt under Seljuks
	1174–87	Saladin takes most of the Crusader cities

	1176	Seljuks defeat Byzantium
	1180	Philip II Augustus becomes King of France
	1189	Richard the Lionhearted becomes King of England & leader of Third Crusade
	1190	Frederick Barbarossa, one of the leaders of the Third Crusade, drowns in Turkey
	1192	Richard the Lionhearted and Saladin sign a truce that gives Christians access to Jerusalem
	ca. 1200	University of Oxford founded
	1204	Crusaders of Fourth Crusade loot Constantinople
	ca. 1214–94	Roger Bacon conducts scientific experiments
	1215	King John of England signs <i>Magna Carta</i>
	1220	Frederick II, King of Germany, Italy and Burgundy, becomes Holy Roman Emperor
	ca. 1225–74	Thomas Aquinas synthesizes Aristotelianism and Christian theology
	1230	Teutonic Knights conquer pagan Prussians
	1236–48	Muslim strongholds in Spain fall to Christians
	1240–41	Mongols invade Poland and Hungary; withdraw on the death of Ogedei Khan
	1259	Louis IX, King of France, launches Seventh Crusade
	ca. 1280	Simon of Keza compiles <i>Gesta Hungarorum</i>
	1284–96	Edward I of England takes Wales and Scotland
Late Middle Ages	ca. 1300–ca.1500	Late Middle Ages
Petrarch	1304–74	
	1309–77	Papal Court in Avignon
	1315	Major famine brought on by Little Ice Age
	1326–71	Ottoman Empire expands into Balkans
	1337	Hundred Years War between England and France begins
	1338	Declaration of Rense; Holy Roman Emperor chosen by German electors, not Pope
	1347	Black Death reaches Europe

	1370–1444	Leonardo Bruni, Florentine politician and humanist
	1377	Papacy returns to Rome
	1378–1417	Western Schism in Roman Catholic Church
	1382	Wycliffe translates Bible into English
Lorenzo Valla	1407–57	
	ca. 1418	Prince Henry founds a school of navigation
Renaissance	ca. 1400– ca. 1600	Renaissance
	1451–1506	Christopher Columbus
	1453	Constantinople taken by Ottomans; last battle of Hundred Years War fought
	1454–1512	Amerigo Vespucci
	1455	English Wars of the Roses begin; Gutenberg prints his Bible
Erasmus	1466–1536	
Peter Martyr	1457–1526	
Copernicus	1473–1543	
Thomas More	1478–1535	
	1485	Ferdinand and Isabella begin Spanish Inquisition
	1486–1576	Bartolomé de las Casas, defender of the rights of indigenous peoples of New World
	1488	Dias sails around the Cape of Good Hope
Juan Sepúlveda	1494–1573	
	1492	Columbus crosses the Atlantic
	1492	Ferdinand and Isabella drive the last Moorish ruler from Spain
	1492	Expulsion of Jews from Spain; Ottoman Sultan invites refugees to Salonika, Greece
	1495	Maximilian I shores up Holy Roman Empire
	1497–98	Vasco da Gama sails around Africa to India
	1515	Francis I becomes King of France
	1517	Luther presents his Ninety-Five Theses beginning Protestant Reformation

	1519	Charles V, King of Spain, becomes Holy Roman Emperor
	1521	Cortés takes Aztec capital
	1533	Pizarro takes Inca Empire
	1534	Henry VIII establishes Church of England
	1536–39	Dano-Norwegian Kingdom becomes Lutheran
	1538	University of Santo Domingo begun
Petrus Maffei	1536–1603	
	1540	Ignatius of Loyola founds Jesuit Order, key group in Catholic Counter Reformation
	1541	John Calvin starts Reformed Church
	1545–63	Council of Trent formulates Counter Reformation
Galileo Galilei	1564–1642	
Johannes Kepler	1571–1630	
	1571	Don Juan of Austria defeats the Turks
	1577–80	Francis Drake sails around the world
	1580	Spain, Portugal, and their vast empires united
	1584	English colony Virginia founded
	1588	English defeat Spanish Armada
	1592–1670	John Amos Comenius, Czech reformer, advocates universal education, compiles Latin picture dictionary
	1594	Henry IV becomes Catholic and king of France
	1596	Ottoman European advance ends in Hungary
	1596–1650	René Descartes
	1616	Thirty Years War between France and Holy Roman Empire Habsburgs begins
	1620	English immigrants arrive in Massachusetts
	1636	Harvard College founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts
Antonius de Leeuwenhoek	1632–1723	

	1642	Civil War in England between king and Parliament
	1643	Louis XIV becomes King of France
	1649	Charles I, King of England, executed
	1660	Charles II regains throne of England
Ludvig Holberg	1684–1754	
	1726	Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> published

I. ITALY AND SPAIN FACE THE FALL

As the fifth century moved slowly toward its close, the Roman Empire as the world had long known it was winding down also. Many scholars say the death of the Roman Empire began in the third century, but some parts of the Empire, and more importantly its myth, continued to exert tremendous influence. Political Rome, like most political entities, had a youth, a maturity (slightly marred by various regressions), and an old age. By the fifth century it was definitely into old age, if not outright senility. Its successors had been nibbling away at it like rats at a cheese for over two centuries, and by 476, the year when Odoacer the German deposed Romulus Augustulus and assumed control of the Western Empire, it consisted only of Italy and parts of two provinces just to the northeast of Italy, Raetia and Noricum. Even in this reduced realm barbarian generals, of whom Odoacer was one of the most successful, had long exercised control. Odoacer and the other barbarian leaders had an immense respect for Rome and a great desire to augment their power by wearing its mantle. When he deposed young Romulus Augustulus, Odoacer called in the Roman Senate to ask for the ancient powers conferred on an *imperator*. Through the Senate he offered the Western Empire to Zeno the Eastern Roman Emperor, who was ruling in Constantinople, provided that Zeno would appoint Odoacer ruler of the West. Zeno, who had no power to do anything else, named Odoacer *patricius* and **consul**, and he became the first *Rex Italiae* with the reluctant and rather superficial blessing of the Eastern Roman Emperor. Zeno, however, lost no time in encouraging Theodoric the Ostrogoth to attack Odoacer. Theodoric invited Odoacer to a banquet and murdered him after dinner, thus becoming the second *Rex Italiae*.

The Eastern Roman Empire, centered in Constantine's Constantinople, considered itself THE Roman Empire and carefully planned a retaking of Italy and all the other western lands. Outsiders might refer to it as the Byzantine Empire because the name of the city Constantine had rebuilt in the image of Rome had been Byzantium. The people of

Constantinople, however, complete with their togas, their manufactured seven hills, their Roman Emperor, and their Roman Senate, were not listening to such nonsense. Under the Emperor Justinian, in 540 they conquered Ravenna on the eastern coast of Italy and established the **Exarchate of Ravenna** as their base of power.

The slow collapse of the gigantic Roman Empire was speeded up somewhat by the fact that the Huns had sprung onto the scene from the Central Asian Plains, or perhaps the Ural Mountains, late in the fourth century. These small, bandy-legged barbarians and their shaggy ponies both had incredible strength and ferocity. They also brought from the East something Europe had never seen—stirrups to give the horseman a better chance of staying on his horse. Up to this point cavalymen, even the efficient Parthians, had been forced to avoid sudden turns and sharp contacts, both of which were very likely to land them on the ground. With their feet firmly anchored in stirrups, the Huns could charge at great speed, inflict damage, wheel about, and veer, maneuvering as no cavalry in the Roman world had maneuvered before. They had plowed through the Gothic and Germanic territories north of the Roman Empire. The Gothic and Germanic peoples had squabbled for many centuries with the Roman Empire, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, sometimes joining the Roman army. As the Huns advanced, those unfortunate enough to live in their direct path poured south in wave after wave, babbling about men whose horses were part of them and clamoring to be admitted to the Roman Empire, for whose power and might they had a somewhat outdated respect and awe. Some waves met acceptance (or in the case of the Visigoths in the Eastern Roman Empire, half-acceptance), and some rejection, but they rarely failed to wreak havoc—sometimes even without any intent to do so. The Western Roman Empire, due to the fact that the Huns were now sweeping across Europe in that general direction, fared worse than the East.

The Sueves and the Vandals crossed Gaul and ravaged Spain. In 410 Alaric the Visigoth sacked Rome itself, and the myth of Rome's invulnerability took a nasty blow. The Romans called home their far-flung legions one after another, from Northern Europe, Africa, and Western Asia. Neither this nor anything else did much good, and the aged Empire tottered toward annihilation. By the middle of the fifth century, Ostrogoth kings

held most of Italy; Vandal kings held Spain and North Africa; Gaul was controlled by Burgundians, Bretons, and Franks; and Britain, largely on its own after the withdrawal of Roman legions in 410, was trying to deal with Pict invasions from Scotland and incursions from across the sea.

People in general were far too busy with their local problems to ponder a world overview. The Goths, Spaniards, Africans, Asians, Greeks, Britons, and some Germans, as well as the Romans and Italians still alive in the old Empire (or even on its fringes) ignored the obvious facts around them and went right on calling themselves Romans for hundreds of years. Some of them actually were Romans, who often added their bit to the general chaos.

There were, however, thoughtful Romans, especially those intellectually inclined, who saw that the world as they knew it was collapsing, and that classical learning was in danger of disappearing completely. Outstanding among these was Boethius, a Roman aristocrat or *patricius* who served as consul and prime minister under Theodoric, the second of the *Reges Italiae*. A tireless student, Boethius as a youth had been educated in both Rome and Athens. His duties at court did not deter him from setting out to translate the great works of Greece into Latin, and he produced a translation of Aristotle which, for better or for worse or both, was the standard text on logic for centuries. To the world's good fortune, as most of the Greek texts were about to take a thousand-year hiatus, he wrote commentaries on Plato, Euclid, and many others. Jealous Ostrogoths, who resented Theodoric's favors to Romans, may have framed Boethius in a plot against Theodoric's life. Boethius was executed in 524, but one of his great goals had been achieved—he had played a great role in preserving classical wisdom for the future.

Boethius was not the only thoughtful man to come near to panic as the political situation in the various nations emerging from the ruins of the Empire continued to deteriorate. As the seventh century began, Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636), a scholar whose old Roman family had long been based in Spain, and who had greatly contributed to winning the Visigoth rulers of Spain to **Trinitarian** beliefs concerning Christianity, became bishop of Seville. As by this time the Christian cathedrals and monasteries had become the guardians of such learning as still survived, Isidore made it his lifework to bring together all the knowledge available

to him, much of it gathered from older texts which had been copied from manuscripts older still. His grand intention was to save the sum of antique knowledge for posterity. His most important work *Etymologiae sive Origines*, an encyclopedic discussion of the definition and origin of many things, was probably the most-read book of the **Middle Ages**. Isidore had an inquiring mind and a gift for storytelling, and his writings were immensely popular. The fact that they were also often grossly inaccurate troubled no one for a thousand years.

II. BRITAIN STRUGGLES WITH FATE

Various parts of the crumbling Empire had faced various fates, and that of Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries was appalling. In 406, a barbarian horde including such forceful groups as the Sueves, Alans, Vandals and Burgundians had moved into central Gaul, and, to put it mildly, made communication between Rome and Britain extremely difficult. This disaster, added to the enemies surrounding the harassed Roman Empire on every side, had impelled Rome to recall its troops from the British Isles in 410 in a futile attempt to shore up her struggling home base.



To protect themselves against incursions, the Romans built a series of forts along the shore. The fort at Port Chester remains in excellent condition as it was used through the centuries.

For at least one hundred years the Romans had been building the Saxon Shore forts along the southeast coast of Britain to guard against piracy and increasing invasions by Germanic tribes including the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Spurred by the Roman withdrawal, these and other Northern forces aided the Picts who lived in Scotland in giving the Romano-British major problems. The Romano-British tried to defend

themselves with a disastrous tactic—they invited other Germanic warriors to fight for them. As many peoples in history have learned to their cost, foreign soldiers are much easier to bring into a country than they are to remove from a country. The various Germanic warriors, finding the British Isles much to their liking, invited their cousins and in-laws over and settled in. In spite of heroic efforts, these invasions of Britain could not be stopped. According to Gildas and the legends preserved in the *Historia Britonum*, ca. 479 one Ambrosius Aurelianus (referred to in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* as Aurelius Ambrosius), an aristocratic Roman warrior, led the Romano-British to victory over the Anglo-Saxons. Some scholars have speculated that he was the leader of the Romano-British at the Battle of Mons Badonicus and may have been the historical basis for King Arthur or Artorius. The last defenders of the Old Way, such as the legendary King Arthur, went down in battle after battle, some detailed in Gildas' book *De Excidio Britanniae*. The Teutonic warriors finally defeated the last of the Romano-British military forces at Deorham in 577. Angle-land was in embryo.

During the continuing invasions of the sixth century the Romano-Britons, giving up on sorting them out, had labeled the whole lot of invaders "Saxons," which was no term of praise. These northerners or **Norsemen** were totally lacking in the respect given to the concept of Roman Empire by other barbarians, and as they advanced they shattered the whole structure of society. The cities were ruined, Roman buildings, roads, and bridges fell into decay, Roman law and institutions disappeared, industry languished, and Christianity, which had as usual through its monasteries become the guardian of classical civilization and learning, found itself buried under a host of pagan gods and customs. Some Christians fled to Wales and Ireland where Celtic Christianity, protected in Wales by the mountains and in Ireland by the sea, fared a little better during the Norse invasions; some fled across the English Channel to the section of Gaul called Armorica (which became known as Brittany), where some remnants of Roman civilization as it had been known struggled on. Other Celtic Christians, such as the Irish monk Columbanus, penetrated farther into Gaul to convert the pagan Germanic peoples.

Meanwhile slowly emerging from the ruins of Roman Britain were seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms formed on the old Teutonic traditions of a thousand years before: Northumbria (or Land North of the Humber

River), Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Wessex, Kent, and Sussex. From time to time the king of one of the kingdoms became a *bretwalda* or wide-ruler, to whom other kings were subject; these kings paid him tribute, attended his court, and fought under his leadership in war. In 560 Ethelbert became King of Kent. He rose to be *bretwalda* of all England south of the Humber. When he married a Frankish princess, she brought with her to England both Christianity and a flock of priests.

In the chaos in Rome, new forces were coming into play. One was the papacy, which was growing in power and influence as the Roman Catholic (or Universal) Church became more and more not only the guardian of learning, but also the focal point of the ancient city. Gregorius Amicia, a Roman patrician who saw the church rather than the military as the best hope of Rome, was elected in 590 to the papal throne. He lost little time in sending several dozen monks to assist in the re-Christianization of Britain. The story is told that he once saw a group of fair-haired youngsters being sold as slaves in Rome. Asking what nation they came from, he was told that they were Angles. "*Non Angli, sed Angeli,*" he replied, and set about sending missionaries so that these ethereal people might not be lost to God. (The earlier Romans could have told him that, however ethereal British appearance might be, British actions did not always match.)

III. ROME GETS A BOOST AND BRITAIN A Foothold

Gregorius, who became known as Gregory the Great and soon after his death in 604 was promoted to Saint Gregory, made the papacy a truly formidable power in Italy. After the deposition of the last Roman Emperor the popes had been the only essentially Roman rulers around—a fact of which Gregory and his followers took full advantage. The papacy claimed two swords, the spiritual and the temporal: one for heavenly power, one for earthly. If they wanted to be around long enough to exercise the first, it was necessary to lay strong hold on the second. His efforts were greatly augmented by the fact that, from the vast wealth which was being been willed to the church by saintly people who loved it and not-so-saintly people who wanted to avoid eternal damnation, he paid the military and fed the populace of Rome, little matters to which no one else was attending at the moment.

Since he was virtually independent of the secular power himself, Gregory insisted that all bishops must have the same standing, and soon every sizeable town had its bishop and a very nearly independent political status. Since clerical government tended to be less harsh than the rule of kings in the countryside, many people moved to the towns in Italy while the rest of Europe was reverting to village or country life. Woven throughout the history of Europe is the fact that Italy never really relinquished the old classical concept of the city-state; this fact laid the foundation for the revival of Western culture and nourished the germ of the Renaissance. This concept also strengthened the position of the Roman nobility and populace, who traditionally feared neither pope nor king and had never ceased to be a force to be reckoned with. Rome considered itself not only a city-state, but THE city-state, and both its firm conviction of its own worth and the mystique that surrounded its name and history made it formidable.

Pope Gregory's monks in Britain were led by another Roman aristocrat, Augustine, who is not to be confused with St. Augustine of Hippo. This one, known as Augustine of Canterbury or the "Apostle of the English," received from King Ethelbert a dwelling at Canterbury for his monks and permission to preach. Augustine founded the Christian Church in southern England and became the first archbishop of Canterbury. The king himself was converted ca. 590, Augustine baptized thousands of Ethelbert's subjects, and a welcome and unusual peace descended on most of the Seven Kingdoms.

Britain's Christian establishments and a revitalized civilization built partly on Roman patterns were flourishing again by the time of the Venerable Bede (ca. 673–735). He spent his scholarly life in the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria. As the history of the Christian Church written by Eusebius and continued by Rufinius made no mention of the Church in Britain, Bede wrote his most famous work, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, with an eye to filling this gap. Like Isodore, he longed to preserve and pass on classical knowledge. Unlike Isodore, he made a careful distinction between fact, hearsay, and probability. His painstaking attempts at accuracy and his view of history as an interaction of forces foreshadow the best of the modern historians.

IV. MEANWHILE BACK IN GAUL

While Spain had been progressing under the Visigothic kings and Britain had been fighting off invaders, large parts of Roman Gaul slowly fell under the power not only of various Gothic groups, but also of a collection of German tribes called the Franks. Merovech, a half-legendary leader of the Salian Franks, gave his name and his penchant for long, unshorn hair to the Merovingian dynasty, as energetic a set of troublemakers as any nation could breed. His son Childeric I, having done yeomanly service as a Roman ally, followed the general trend of his era and set up a kingdom for himself with Roman permission establishing his capital at Tournai in Belgium. In 481, while the Ostrogoths in Italy and Visigoths in Spain and southern Gaul were enjoying their power, Childeric I died, leaving to succeed him an ambitious and unscrupulous teenage son with a desire for greatness. The youngster's name was Chlodovech, which was shortened to Clovis. Clovis ruled a mere corner of Gaul, but he soon expanded his territory by war and by diplomacy. Perhaps the only person he met as strong-willed as he was his wife, the Burgundian princess Clotilda, who persuaded this king who claimed his descent from the pagan god Wotan to become not only a Christian, but a Trinitarian, or Catholic. He suffered a setback when he fought against Theodoric and his Ostrogoths in northern Italy. Even though the Ostrogoths were also fighting the troops of the Eastern Roman Empire, in 508 they managed to give Clovis one of his rare defeats. They would not be so fortunate against the Lombards, another set of northern invaders who took over Northern Italy in the late sixth century. According to Gregory of Tours, Anastasius the Eastern Roman Emperor, pleased with his exploits against Theodoric the Ostrogoth, who not only ruled Italy but was also an **Arian** rather than a Trinitarian Christian, gave Clovis the titles of *patricius* and consul, an imperial badge of legitimacy which counted for a great deal.

By Clovis' death in 511, the Frankish kingdom stretched over almost all of Gaul and the greater part of the Rhine valley. However, this kingdom was far from harmonious. The northern portion of Clovis' kingdom

was called **Neustria** “New Land,” the eastern portion **Austrasia** “East Land.” The southern part, which the Franks by this time had wrested from the Visigoths, was called **Aquitaine**, its ancient Roman provincial title. It managed to remain semi-independent and largely Roman in population and pursuits as well as name. In Neustria and Aquitaine two languages emerged, both derived from Latin, but serving as one more reason for the two developing French populations to despise each other. To fragment matters even further, Austrasia the eastern portion was developing from its ancient roots a language of its own, which would be called German.

Following the custom of the Franks, Clovis in his will divided his kingdom between his four sons, which led in the sixth century and the first part of the seventh to a series of devastating wars between his descendants. These ferocious civil wars ruined the land just as those in Britain had ruined the land there. There was little food on the farms to feed the country folk, much less to sell to the towns. Roman aqueducts were broken; Roman roads fell into disrepair and were scarcely usable. Repair was impossible, as the old Roman system of administration had broken down due to a lack of civil servants (who needed to be educated in a land where education was on its deathbed). The small chance of finding such rarities as clean water and food in urban areas produced a predictable result. People began once more to cluster around the villages, and the city population dropped to three percent of the whole.

While the kings were embroiled in their incessant warfare and long arduous campaigns far from the capital, they each appointed a *major domus*—Latin for the greater one in the palace. In English the phrase is often rendered “mayor of the palace.” What began as a clerk, as administration broke down, became a prime minister. All the great landowners competed for this office, which was first in power among the lords. One of these, Pepin II of Heristal, gained the support of the lords, and by 681 he ruled both Neustria and Austrasia, a king in all but name. The people still held allegiance to Merovingian kings, descendants of the great Clovis, but these had become less effective and less important with every generation. Pepin brought them out on state occasions, still sporting their trademark long hair: they said and did what they were told.

When Pepin II died in 714, he tried to pass his power on to his heirs. In the ensuing struggle his illegitimate son Charles emerged victorious, and by 724 had consolidated his control of the Frankish lands and earned the name of Charles Martel—Charles the Hammer—for his military strikes against his enemies.



Charles Martel, Charles the “Hammer,” is celebrated for his victory at Poitiers where he defeated the Muslim forces, who retreated to the Iberian peninsula. Martel’s success kept the Muslims south of the Pyrenees where they established the kingdom of Al-Andalus which flourished until the reconquest of the thirteenth century.

As Aquitaine had retained its dukes, its Roman civilization, and its semi-independence, its Duke Eudes hoped that all this uproar in Frankish territory would allow him to gain his complete independence. But in 721 he had to beat away from his capital, Toulouse, a raiding party sent from the south by the latest major player on the European chessboard, the Muslims who now controlled a large part of Spain which they had taken from the Visigoths between 711 and 714. Eudes gritted his teeth and called in Charles Martel when the Muslims or **Moors** sent a force from Spain into Aquitaine in 732. Realizing that the Moors depended heavily upon their cavalry mounted on nimble Arabian horses, Martel organized a cavalry of his own composed of the large horses and heavy armor that would dominate the wars of the Middle Ages. The massive Frankish cavalry broke the lighter Moorish charges again and again, and

the Moors had to retreat and give up the glittering prospect of adding northwestern Europe to their huge but hastily assembled empire. After their prophet Mohammed's death a century earlier they had taken advantage of the mutual exhaustion of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and Persia, which had fought each other to a standstill. The Muslim armies had exploded in every direction, winning conquests which they had not taken enough time to solidify. As occurs with many power bases quickly assembled, internal dissensions caused their empire to show signs of coming apart at the seams.

Charles Martel, content with his supremacy as Mayor of the Palace, ruled the country while one or the other of the Merovingians sat on the throne until in 737 Theuderich IV died. Knowing well that nasty results could come from claiming to be king, Charles did not commit this often fatal error. However, he did not try to establish a new king—he simply allowed the throne to remain empty. No one seems to have noticed. Before he died in 741, he divided the kingdom between his son Carloman, who ruled Austrasia as mayor of the palace, and his younger son Pepin III the Short, who ruled Neustria in the same capacity. The two brothers, taking a leaf from their father's book, forestalled any opposition by rounding up a Merovingian, Childeric the Stupid, whom they crowned, thus giving themselves legitimacy. In 747 Carloman, influenced by St. Boniface, retired to a monastery and Pepin the Short ruled the whole realm, so securely now that he began to have wistful thoughts of ridding himself of Childeric the Stupid. He knew from history, however, that the people could easily have a nasty reaction to summary measures against a Merovingian, however worthless. But what if the pope, God's emissary, denounced a Merovingian? Well aware that a new Lombard king down in Italy looked like trouble for the pope, Pepin decided that the father of Christendom might not be too exalted to engage in a little exchange of favors. His brother Carloman, most fortunately, was in the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino, and could easily be sent as Pepin's emissary to the pope. An agreement was reached, and in 751 while Aistulf, the new Lombard king, was happily preparing to expel the Exarch of the Byzantine Empire from Ravenna, a stately embassy from Pepin came to Pope Zacharias asking whether it was right to call a person with no authority king or whether the person who actually ruled should carry the title. This pope was no fool; he closely examined the

whole political situation, weighed his options carefully, and solemnly ruled that the title should belong to the man who fulfilled the duties. Childeric, ninth generation descendant of Clovis, was deprived of office, had his long hair shorn, and retired, as threatened or deposed monarchs were increasingly inclined to do, to a monastery.

In January 752, the Frankish nobility met at Soissons and elected Pepin king of the Franks, first of the Carolingian dynasty. The eventual coronation, however, was a religious ceremony in 754, in which the new Pope Stephen III declared Pepin king “by the grace of God.” This pious spectacle was actually a balancing act between the political needs of Aistulf king of Lombardy, Pope Stephen III, and Pepin, king of the Franks. Both Aistulf and Pepin, with common sense rare among leaders of the **Dark Ages**, wanted to avoid armed conflict if possible while profiting by the threat of it. Pepin, who never missed an opportunity to gain a bit more prestige which might come in handy, wanted the pope to come to him and had the audacity to demand that Aistulf grant the pope safe passage through Lombardy, and through Pavia, his own capital, to visit Pepin. Once again showing that he had more good sense than empty pride, Aistulf agreed, and in 754 Stephen became the first pope to travel beyond the Alps while in office. Stephen arrived in Chalon and remained for some months surrounded by splendor. Pepin was crowned again by the hand of the pope, his twelve-year-old son Charles and his three-year-old son Carloman were anointed, and the pope officially declared that the Franks were to choose kings only from Pepin’s family through the ages. Pepin received the title “*Patricius Romanus*” as Clovis had, but this time not from the Eastern Roman Emperor but from the Pope of Rome.

All this was not without its price, of course. Following Pepin’s coronation, the pope secured his promise of armed intervention in Italy and his pledge to give the papacy the territory of Ravenna, which the Lombards had taken from the Eastern Roman Emperor. Pepin then ordered the Lombard monarch to hand over all property belonging to the deposed Exarchate of Ravenna. This command was not received calmly, and only after a couple of Frankish invasions was the Exarchate territory, including Rome, surrendered to the *force majeure*. Pepin awarded the pope, in a suitably elaborate ceremony, what was afterwards known as the Donation of Pepin. The gift made the pope ruler over a strip of territory that

extended diagonally across Italy from coast to coast, and which became the foundation for the Papal States. Now the Papacy had a firm grasp on that temporal sword it needed to help maintain the spiritual one.

When Pepin died in 768, he controlled all of modern France except Brittany, and some of Germany as well. He was a remarkable man, and might have gone down in history as Pepin the Great if his achievements had not been overshadowed by those of his son Charlemagne.

V. THE COMING OF CHARLEMAGNE

Pepin, true to his unfortunate Frankish heritage, left to Charles, who was in his late twenties, and his younger brother Carloman each a portion of the realm. Charles received the coastal regions along the Atlantic; his brother, the districts north and west of the Alps. The Aquitanians chose this moment to fight for their independence, and were firmly put down by Charles.

While these developments were taking place in the land of the Franks, down in Pavia the Lombards had an ambitious king, Desiderius. In 758 he had captured Spoleto and even the southern Italian city of Benevento, hoping to forge a stronger kingdom of the Lombards to counteract the growing Frankish influence. As a more subtle part of his anti-Frank program, he flattered Carloman, Charlemagne's younger brother, and fed his jealousy of his brother. When Desiderius arranged a marriage between Carloman and one of his daughters, Charlemagne's mother Bertrada (or Bertha Broadfoot, who evidently made up in heft what her husband Pepin the Short lacked) experienced what she deemed an inspiration. Charlemagne had divorced his first wife Himiltrude after she bore him a deformed son, Pepin the Hunchback. Bertrada, trying to avert an all too likely war between her sons, persuaded Charlemagne to wed another of Desiderius' daughters in 771. Unfortunately Carloman chose that particular year to breathe his last, leaving his Lombard widow and two infant sons. Charlemagne promptly took over the entire kingdom, and made no promises, even shadowy ones, about being regent for the two princes. The widow went home to Pavia, taking with her her two sons and her hatred for Charlemagne. That same eventful year Charlemagne divorced his new wife and married Hildegarde of Swabia (who lost no time in beginning to produce the seven children she bore to Charlemagne, among whom were the three princes he groomed as successors). All these stirring events had done absolutely nothing to increase Charlemagne's popularity in Pavia. Hoping to force the new Pope Adrian I to recognize the rights of the children of Carloman, Desiderius made the drastic mistake of invading the Papal States and surrounding Rome. This of course gave Charlemagne

a marvelous opportunity to express righteous Christian anger, and with the speed and efficiency for which he was becoming famous he moved across the Alps, besieged Pavia, forced Desiderius from the throne, and hauled him off to prison in Frankish territory. With this collapse of the Lombard kingdom in 773, Duke Arechi II of Benevento found some of his territory transferred to the Papal States (perhaps we should not ask if this transfer had any relationship to the fact that the pope made no unpleasant remarks about Charlemagne's two divorces).

Other nations or tribes becoming fractious soon learned that Charles was well on his way to becoming Charlemagne. He established his capital at Aachen, where he proclaimed his independence of some southern influences (and pleased his Frankish nobility) by taking up the ancient Frankish costume of furred jackets and gartered legs. However, this was not a sign that he intended to return to all the ways of the old Franks: he also turned his unflagging energy not only to subduing but also to Christianizing the pagan German tribes—Bavarians, Thuringians, Saxons, and Frisians—on the eastern border of Austrasia. Not content with Christianizing his conquests, he decided to educate them, too, along with his own Franks.



The Cathedral at Aachen grew up around the original Palatine Chapel which was part of Charlemagne's palace complex in his imperial capital. Charlemagne is believed to have modeled his chapel after the domed churches of Ravenna.

Charlemagne's father Pepin and his uncle Carloman had begun the "Carolingian Renaissance," aimed at reforming the Frankish church, which certainly needed it. Charlemagne and the scholars he went about collecting showed no desire to meddle with church dogma, however. They allowed the pope and the clergy full reign over such dogma, accepting the Platonic view, as interpreted by the clergy, that truth was transcendental and could not be arrived at by human reason. Charlemagne reaffirmed the Donation of Pepin of the territory taken from the Exarchate at Ravenna and given to the pope and showed deep respect to the pontiff, visiting him in Rome in 780 and 785.

Noting that, despite his father's and his uncle's best efforts, most Christian churches in his kingdom had been serving as barns, the Biblical texts were full of errors made worse by poor pronunciation, and both preachers and teachers were lamentably lacking, Charlemagne set out with his usual enthusiasm and organizational skills on a massive recruitment project. He cajoled out of Italy Paul the Deacon, who had gone to Benevento in the retinue of a princess from Pavia who was the bride of the Duke of Benevento. This intellectual had settled into the greatest of Beneventan monasteries, Monte Cassino (to which he returned after a hectic time spent in Charlemagne's court), to write first a history of Rome, then his great history of the Lombards, our primal source for information on this tribe. Also from Italy Charlemagne brought the grammarians Paulinus of Aquileia and Peter of Pisa. (This latter was a very unusual grammarian—he was witty and merry, which qualities must have been much appreciated by Charlemagne's overworked associates. Reforming such a world as Charlemagne ruled must have been a very wearing task.) For a finishing touch to his collection of intellectuals he persuaded Alcuin the Anglo-Saxon, whom he met at Parma in 782, to move from the cathedral school at York to Aachen to reform Frankish education, such as it was.

Charlemagne had more than religion in mind in his educational reforms. He had lived all his life in a land filled with the legendary feats and building triumphs of the Romans, and he had seen Rome. He knew that the power this ancient race had wielded and the gigantic cities they had created were not built on military might alone. They had possessed intelligence, art, and learning that enabled them to erect and maintain structures almost beyond the conception of men of his day. Their laws and their civil administration, symbolized by the *Pax Romana*, had

overarched a world unbelievably peaceful and secure by eighth-century standards. He was determined to learn their secrets and to rule as they had. One of the most touching pictures in Einhard's biography of the Great Frank is that of Charlemagne keeping writing materials under his pillow and struggling to write Latin during wakeful nights.

Late in 800 Charlemagne went to Rome to aid Pope Leo III, whom some Roman nobles with an agenda of their own had accused of various crimes and had imprisoned. On Christmas Day Charlemagne received his reward. As he, in the toga and sandals of a *patricius Romanus*, knelt before the pope in St. Peter's Basilica in prayer, Pope Leo produced a jeweled crown and set it on Charlemagne's head. The carefully instructed Roman populace, acting as *Senatus populusque Romanus*, dutifully shouted "Hail to Charles the **Augustus**, crowned by God, the great and peace-bringing Emperor of the Romans." The pope anointed Charlemagne and offered him the homage which after the fall of the Western Empire had supposedly been given to the Emperor in Constantinople. Conveniently forgetting that the Romans had been a whole people and that Charlemagne, however incredible, was only one man, pope and people fervently hoped that this already legendary leader could recreate the *Pax Romana*.

As the ninth century roared into Europe, there was little sign that this optimistic hope would be realized: four separate wars were raging around the Mediterranean. This situation arose because four major powers were adorning the edges of that turbulent body of water. The Muslims had turned out to be quite as prone as Christians to blood feuds and power struggles. In the **Battle of the Zab** in 750, the Abbasids of Baghdad had overthrown the ruling Umayyads and, in order to complete their victory and promote their own brand of peace, massacred most of the clan. Being nothing if not thorough, they ordered all princes of the Umayyad family slain. In 755 Abd-er-Rahman (Abd al-Rahman), grandson of the Caliph Hisham and the only Umayyad prince to escape the slaughter, was invited into Spain by the Muslim faction who had supported the Umayyads and who feared the land they had received from those caliphs might be reclaimed by the new rulers.

Thus Muslim North Africa was under the Abbasid Caliphate, and Spain (at least a great part of it) was ruled by the Umayyad (Omayyad) caliphs. North of these lay the Frankish Empire ruling what would become France and Germany and exercising great power in Italy, and

last was the aging Byzantine Lion, which was by no means as yet toothless and was extremely likely to resent Charlemagne's new title. With his usual acumen he did not presume upon that title, and even offered marriage to Irene of Constantinople, as he was single again. (His wife Hildgarde had gone to her eternal and probably well-deserved rest. Most sources say that Charlemagne's last wife was Luitgard. They differ widely about the ladies whose connection with him was of a less formal nature.) Irene's fall from power, however, nipped Charlemagne's promising scheme in the bud and delayed for another two centuries the marital union of Frank and Byzantine. Thus each of the four great powers found itself at enmity with its two nearest neighbors. This piquant situation resulted in four separate wars, some hot, some smoldering. Both the Franks and the Abbasids were fighting individual wars against the Byzantines and the Umayyads. Although Charlemagne and Harun al-Rashid of the Abbasids had nothing in common but shared enemies, shared enemies are a great stimulant of sudden friendships, and in 801 these two rulers began exchanging embassies and presents, to the consternation of Constantinople and the various rulers of Spain.

As the ninth century unfolded, Charlemagne's great works were consolidated. In 804, the same year that we hear the last of the Saxon rebellions, the last of the Avars submitted to him and disappeared as a separate people. His huge kingdom, unmatched in four centuries, forced changes in the policies of many governments. In the patchwork of ongoing conflicts Emperor Nicephorus in Constantinople, facing a growing war with the Abbasids, decided in 810 to make peace with Charlemagne on a compromise basis. He would recognize Frankish ownership of what had once been the Exarchate of Ravenna if the Franks would restore Venice and the Adriatic coast to Constantinople. This worked out neatly, and in 812, Nicephorus' successor, Michael I, even recognized Charlemagne as Western Emperor.